

United States Department of Agriculture  
U. S. Extension Service, Division of Field Studies and Training  
and  
Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations  
Cooperating

3 SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE ON  
EXTENSION EXPERIENCES AROUND THE WORLD,  
May 16 to 20, 1949,  
Held in  
The United States Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D. C.

By  
Douglas Ensminger<sup>1/</sup>, Conference Chairman

In issuing invitations to attend this Conference on Extension Experiences Around the World, the two sponsoring agencies--Extension Service and the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations--stated that the conference was being called to: (1) Outline systematically either the kind of problems the various countries of the world have, or problems which they seem likely to ask our help in solving through an extension approach; (2) appraise the recent experiences the countries have had in extension and related educational fields; and (3) within the framework of a country's culture, suggest the kinds of extension approaches that seem appropriate to given types of problems.

This conference is largely a follow-up of a similar one held in 1944 under the sponsorship of the two agencies giving leadership to this conference. Since the 1944 meeting was called before the end of the war, it had a highly significant purpose of outlining the contributions extension methods and techniques might make in the rehabilitation of war-torn countries. It brought together the available information on extension methods and techniques for nine major areas of the world and analyzed past experience in extending scientific information to rural people. The proceedings of the 1944 conference were printed and widely disseminated.<sup>2/</sup> Rarely during the past 5 years has a week gone by when we have not had calls for this report. Some 10,000 copies have been distributed, mostly on request from people in other countries.

#### Learning About Extension Methods and Techniques

Since the conference of 1944, many of the countries of the world have sent people to the United States to learn first hand about American agricultural methods, especially as they are applied in extension work, and extension workers from the

<sup>1/</sup> In Charge, Educational Research Section, Division of Field Studies and Training, Extension Service.

<sup>2/</sup> U. S. Department of Agriculture, Extension Service and Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations. Conference report on the contribution of extension methods and techniques toward the rehabilitation of war-torn countries, September 19-22, 1944. 239 pp. + v. U. S. Dept. Agr. [u.n.] October 1945.

United States have, upon invitation, visited other countries and given advice and counsel in appraising the efforts of those countries to apply the findings of science to farm, home, and community problems.

An intensification of interest in extension development around the world has resulted from President Truman's inaugural address, in which he urged a bold new program for making available the benefits of science for improvement of underdeveloped areas. Since most of the underdeveloped areas of the world are primarily agrarian, the implementation of such a program will fall heavily on extension approaches. The one firm conclusion coming out of this conference is, that extension methods and techniques, by whatever name they are called around the world, have proved the best and most effective ways to extend the findings of science. Only within the framework of education can we be sure that the fruits of science will be carried to the masses of the people and result in improved and more secure family living.

In keeping with good extension tradition, this conference has provided a series of open forums on extension and related educational methods and techniques for most of the countries of the world. It has stayed clear of any questions of policy or the making of recommendations. In taking this course, the conference has itself followed a basic principle of extension education, namely, that an early task and responsibility of the educator is to help mobilize and interpret facts, not to recommend or to make policy. The facts in this case are the more recent extension and related educational experiences around the world.

The conference discussions have been centered around extension and related educational approaches in the following nine regions of the world: (1) The Balkans (Greece and Turkey); (2) Southwestern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal); (3) Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Arabia); (4) Central and Western Europe (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Great Britain, Ireland); (5) Eastern Asia (China, Korea, Japan); (6) Southeastern Asia and India (The Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Burma, Indo-China, Indonesia, Siam, Pacific Islands); (7) Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; (8) Africa (Liberia, Ethiopia, Union of South Africa, British Colonies, etc.); (9) Latin America. In addition to the regional committees, four special committees were organized: (1) Private agencies; (2) Social sciences in relation to extension work; (3) Importance of coordination and effective utilization of all welfare and educational agencies working with rural people; (4) Training needs (for people from other countries coming to the United States to learn about extension, and for United States extension workers going abroad).

Extension experiences have been many and varied since our conference of 1944. In preparing a list of persons to be invited to this conference, we found over 300 people who have had varied world experiences in agriculture, homemaking, and youth activities. It is highly significant, I feel, that of this number, over 200 busy people found time to come--and at their own expense--to participate in the discussions and suggest educational approaches that seem feasible for future exploration and testing. Within this group are outstanding people from the land-grant colleges and universities, including deans, extension directors, State home demonstration and 4-H Club leaders, extension supervisors, specialists, and county agricultural and home agents. These people from the land-grant colleges and universities have been joined by agricultural attaches, farm-organization leaders, people from private agencies, religious leaders, people from the Food and Agriculture Organization, Pan American Union, and, of course, people from other agencies of the Federal Government, as well as from the two sponsoring agencies.

## Science and Folk Knowledge

M. L. Wilson, Director of Extension Work, N. E. Dodd, Director General of Food and Agriculture Organization, and Fred J. Rossiter, Associate Director of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations all emphasized that technical assistance in any field, and particularly in agriculture and homemaking, was of little use to any country of the world unless some method for extending the new knowledge accompanied it. Raymond Miller of FAO also placed emphasis upon this point in his discussion of cooperatives in Asia. Though the regional committees dealt with widely different cultures, one factor that seems common to all the reports is that at present a gap exists between science or technical knowledge coming out of scientific research and the folk or common knowledge of the people. In general, there are lacking adequate social institutions with experienced staffs in most of the countries of the world to carry the findings of science to the common man of the underprivileged areas of the world.

A careful examination of the committee reports, particularly the more precise analysis of extension in a given country, emphasizes the wide range of educational methods and techniques now being followed by the various countries of the world. Over and over again I heard people say they were impressed by the importance of adapting educational methods to fit the peculiar situation of each country. This conference brought into focus the fact that many of the countries are now doing a great deal in the field of extension education. While most of them want to learn and improve what they are doing, they also have much to offer. It is significant, therefore, that through this interchange of experiences, the extension workers from the United States gained as much in understanding as they gave. For those who would go into any other country to counsel and assist in the development of educational approaches, this conference would say, "Pay close attention to the most basic principle in education--understand what is now being done and start with the people where they are." This is so important that it needs to be emphasized.

Our committee on the social sciences in relation to extension emphasized, and with force, that anyone approaching the task of extension education in a country that is foreign to him must early orient himself to the top administrative policy-making and supervisory personnel of the country. It also emphasized the importance of equal orientation and understanding to the farm and rural people the program is eventually to serve. The report stressed that for each group there were deep-seated attitudes, traditions, and ways of doing things that must be understood. In speaking of the importance of understanding traditions, Horace Belshaw of FAO said it is as unwise to ignore folk practices as it is to ignore the power of science.

## Change in Philosophy and Point of View

Though change is expected to occur through extension, change in philosophy and point of view about the role of education must of necessity come from those who formulate policy and give direction to the conduct and organization of the program. Many attending this conference concluded that, altogether too frequently in the past, people who have gone abroad have come home frustrated because they could not, within the time limits of their assignment, gain acceptance and obtain action from the top people on a given program. R. K. Kerkham, a senior Agricultural Officer of the Government of Uganda, drove home a significant point when he said that in Uganda it took 3 years for an agricultural officer to render effective service. During this time, a person must orient himself to the new culture and learn from the bottom up, as well as from the top down, how best to approach the job of education.

Throughout the committee deliberations, one heard this point emphasized over and over again. Much discussion, and, perhaps I should truthfully report, criticism was leveled at the present tendency to send people abroad on short missions and expect them to make a significant contribution in the development of a program tailored to the country's needs.

As was true with the conference in 1944, the committee discussions this time reemphasized what Director Wilson has been saying about extension. It is informal, away-from-school education, and, being informal, it emphasizes and employs many different methods. In discussing the Rockefeller Foundation Survey of Crete, Leland G. Allbaugh, Associate Director for the Social Sciences, Rockefeller Foundation, said that any person going to Crete in the capacity of an extension worker would want to recognize that the coffee house as a gathering place is important, and is therefore an important place from which to disseminate information. This conference would conclude that when we talk about extension and related educational approaches for other countries, a wise approach would be to start by considering ways of inducing and introducing change, and leaving for later discussion and review the organization or formal system for administering the program. Throughout the week, the illustrations used both by the speakers and by those in committees have, as Miss Mary Rokahr of the Extension Service said when presiding Tuesday morning, made clear that we tend to talk a universal language when we speak about basic education and extension principles in working with people. Our differences come into focus when we talk about what kind of agencies and organizations are needed to direct the educational activities and the formation of policies to carry out the educational work.

Extension, wherever it is found, has as its objective the initiation and direction of change and bringing about improvement, be it in farm and home practices and attitudes or community programs and activities. This has been said over and over again throughout the conference and in many different ways. In talking this week about the role of extension workers in the many countries of the world, emphasis has been placed on their being free of regulatory and governmental supervisory functions. The conference would say an extension worker must be free to create interest and formulate attitudes on the part of the people to want to do things for themselves because they become convinced of the importance of these things and see how they will result in improved practices and aid their personal security. Experience has shown that this can best be done when the worker is clearly recognized as an educator.

Speaking of the past, we note that extension experiences around the world are far more prevalent in the field of agriculture than in either the field of home-making or of youth. In the conference of 1944, it was with real difficulty that we were able to find a few people who could make a contribution in the field of extension homemaking. Although more attention has been focused on extension homemaking around the world in recent years, a review of committee deliberations makes clear that this phase of extension education is still much retarded. This also is true of youth work. The discussions of this conference suggest that if the underdeveloped areas of the world are to be aided in improving their standards of living, the farm and home approach must be given greater emphasis. It would also seem clear that in the long-range view, strong youth programs would be called for. Since the participants in this conference universally agree on the importance of increased extension emphasis on homemaking, we are asking a group of women who participated in the committee deliberations to formulate a supplementary statement on the urgency of giving strong emphasis on the home and on homemaking in any program for aid in the less developed areas of the world.

Desirability of Slow Changes in Practices

A warning was given to all people who would accept foreign assignments to go slowly in deciding that some practice should be changed merely because the practices did not seem to make sense. It has been illustrated again and again in this conference that what may not make sense to the individual working in a foreign culture, in all probability makes great sense to the people of that culture. Furthermore, a careful examination of practices will reveal circumstances of the past that have given sanction and support to those practices. Several people in this conference have said it is important that a new worker stop to analyze the practice. Such analysis may reveal that to change it may or may not be for the best.

Edward A. Kennard of the State Department said that an extension worker going abroad needs to analyze situations from at least two points of view--his own and the other fellow's. He should know how to analyze the situation he is facing so that he can best know what to do and how and when to do it. This "sizing up" of the situation is more complicated than one tends to assume. The definition of the situation by the worker who is put into a new culture may be, that what is needed is to get the people to adapt and adopt many of the tried and proved practices and methods of the country from which the worker comes. The native worker may interpret the situation so differently, that he may conclude the new worker has little or no appreciation of the country's practices and methods--and he may be right.

I. O. Schaub, Director of Extension at North Carolina State College of Agriculture clearly illustrated this problem when he said the Germans had many practices that adequately fit their needs, but to an unoriented outsider, they might look outdated. One had only to sit in on the committee deliberations to see how differently people from various countries viewed the problems of the region and the suggestions made for improvement. Director Schaub forcibly illustrated the importance of understanding a people's value system. In discussing social values, the social science committee in relation to extension stated that to know and understand the values of the people was basic and a prerequisite to the development of any program. In one committee discussion, I heard a group conclude that values were the primary motivating forces within a culture. They were saying that any program for improvement must be so ordered as to be convincing to the people for which it was intended and thus make their values seem more secure to them.

In speaking of security in the vast underdeveloped areas of the world, I am reminded of what Alexander Leighton of Cornell said when he participated on the social science committee deliberations some 3 weeks ago. He emphasized that the people most in need of help might, and probably would, be the least willing to accept change, for change would itself present those families with renewed insecurity. Their present security was in the traditions of the people. In this connection, Mr. Kerkham's experiences and those of members of private agencies, of agricultural missionaries, of Spencer Hatch and Ralph H. Allee of the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences at Turrialba, Costa Rica, strongly indicate that to help the people in the vast underdeveloped areas of the world will be a long, slow task. Though there would be need for orientation and help from the top, the success of the program will, in large part, be dependent upon the approaches made to the people, the way their traditional patterns of organization and leadership are used, and the new securities the people will realize from the change. Ide P. Trotter, Dean of the Graduate School, Texas A and M College, reinforced this point in his illustrated talk on extension in foreign countries. He emphasized that the program must be local in contrast to an administratively developed program from the top and handed down.

Raymond Miller's forthright statement that straight technological assistance was not enough in helping to meet the problems and needs of the underdeveloped areas of the world was reinforced by most, if not all, committee deliberations. The successful demonstrations of the agricultural missionaries throughout the world bear testimony to the generalization that it is the total man encompassing his spiritual, social, and material needs who must be included in any substantial program for self-help. Dr. Belshaw re-emphasized this point when he said that for many sections of the world, the best guarantee of getting increased agricultural production was the development of a basic health program. He stressed the point that a sick man has few interests and responds to limited stimuli. One would hope that in the assembly of future missions, increased attention will be given to placing on those missions competent social scientists and home economists, and that their charge will be to look at man and his relation to his total environment rather than to one specific segment to which technology is related.

The private agencies continue to play an important role in pioneering and in demonstrating extension methods around the world. Because of their substantial contribution to extension development in the past, and because of the clearly recognized challenge ahead, a committee was set up to review recent extension experiences by the private agencies and to suggest how they may function even more effectively in the future.

#### Some Major Rural Problems

This conference emphasized that all people, wherever they are, have basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, emotional response from others, and security. In studying the major farm, home, and community problems for each of the countries of the world discussed in this conference, I was impressed by the similarity of problems. To illustrate this, I'm listing only those discussed by the Latin American committee and the committee for the Middle East.

#### Major Rural Problems Considered by the Latin American Committee

##### 1. Farm problems:

###### a. Land use

- Soil and water conservation
- Maintenance of fertility of the land
- Varieties of crops and pastures, forages, and concentrates
- Pest and disease control
- Cultural practices
- Diversification

###### b. Quality and care of livestock and poultry as to inherent ability to produce. Disease and parasite control.

###### c. Tools and equipment both as to kinds adapted to specific situations and as to availability.

###### d. Farm power: Horses, mules, and oxen. Harness, wagons, and other light equipment.

###### e. Improved care of dairy cows and their products.

2. Home problems:

- a. Diets as to content and preparation.
- b. Houses--space, air and light, floors, chimney, cooking facilities, utensils, beds, insect and vermin control, rodent control. Insufficient home-produced foods.
- c. Waste disposal, latrines.
- d. Water, safe.
- e. Spare-time industries.

3. Community problems:

- a. Sanitation: Water supply, waste disposal, insect control.
- b. Marketing facilities: Safe storage, market preparation, outlets.
- c. Credit emphasizing education for its use.
- d. Purchasing power of farm products.
- e. Reclamation and development of land.
- f. Effectiveness of rural workers.
  - Security of tenure
  - Inadequate training
  - Part-time employment
  - Willingness to sacrifice for the job
- g. Organization and facilities for recreation: Play, reading materials.
- h. Reliable and valid information
  - Availability of world's knowledge
  - Means of obtaining information, research
  - Means of getting facts into operation
- i. Effective group action on road construction and repair, water systems, sanitation, cooperatives, recreation, land use regulation, etc.
- j. Cooperation with health authorities.

Major Rural Problems Considered by the Middle East Committee

- 1. Population growth in relation to cultivated and crop areas.
- 2. Land tenure and land distribution.
- 3. Problem of monoculture--dependence upon one cash crop.
- 4. Lack of adequate educational facilities for rural folk, including the subproblem of literacy, adult education, and agricultural training on all levels.

5. Tribal settlement.
6. Cooperative organization.
7. Farm credit
8. Various health and sanitation problems, including housing, nutrition, and disease control.
9. Various problems relative to the application of modern techniques to agricultural production, such as those relating to farm machinery, pest control, and soil conservation.
10. The development of effective systems of extension to bridge the great gap that exists in the Middle East between technical and scientific authorities on the one hand, and the large peasant masses on the other.

#### Possible Approaches to Problems

In talking about essential steps in national agricultural improvement, Ralph Phillips of FAO reminded us of the importance of careful delineation of the essential problems and the necessity of an integrated approach. These points were also stressed by the committees when they discussed possible approaches to the vast array of problems for the countries under consideration. Emphasis was placed on necessity for early enlistment of the institutional and agency resources available and of finding ways and means for bringing them into close working relationship. Over and over again it was emphasized that since the underdeveloped areas of the world were most limited in resources, it was both urgent and wise to mobilize, coordinate, and effectively utilize all available resources. It was because of the importance of this problem that a special committee on coordination and effective utilization of resources was asked to outline some basic principles of coordination.

This conference has repeatedly pointed out that one of the great problems facing many of the countries of the world that have an interest in developing an adequate extension system, is limited personnel. In general, the technically trained people in most countries come from an urban background. They have limited contacts with rural problems and for the most part are limited in training in the social sciences and education. Few possess a philosophy of service to the common man. In making these statements, the committees were humble in saying they did not want to be misunderstood. They wanted only to point out the problems yet to be solved before channels of communication from the top down could be opened and freely used in extending scientific information to the masses.

Requests to the United States Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges for help in training people from other countries in extension approaches are constantly increasing. Because of this urgent need, a special committee on personnel training was set up to consider this problem.

In conclusion, I want to repeat what has been common discussion in and out of formal sessions, namely, that Director Wilson and Associate Director Rossiter are to be highly commended for their vision and leadership in providing this week's series of open forums on extension experiences around the world.

On behalf of the two sponsoring agencies, we cannot express in words our deep sense of gratitude to the committee chairmen and cochairmen for their untiring efforts. I personally want to say thanks to the other members of the steering committee who worked so faithfully in planning and directing this conference. And finally, without the faithful work and contribution of all members of the committee the conference would not have succeeded. So to you I say--thanks for a job well done.

Note: The conference proceedings will be published at an early date.

